

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**For More Information Contact**

**VDH 05-32**

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**VIRGINIANS WITH DIABETES URGED TO TAKE CONTROL  
TO REDUCE SERIOUS COMPLICATIONS**

*November is National Diabetes Month*

(RICHMOND, Va.)—Leona Rowe knew something was wrong. She was extremely thirsty and constantly tired, even though she got eight hours of sleep each night. After about two weeks, Rowe went to her doctor. A lab test revealed what her symptoms suggested. She had type 2 diabetes.

Rowe joined the estimated 18 million Americans and 400,000 Virginians who have been diagnosed with this disease. In type 2 diabetes, the most common form of diabetes, the body either does not produce enough insulin or it fails to use insulin properly, causing sugar to build up in the blood. Most cases of type 2 diabetes appear in people over age 40, but because of the nation's increased rates of obesity and physical inactivity, it is now being found in children and teens. Diabetes is also costly. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the total cost of diabetes in 2003 amounted to \$132 billion nationally, and \$172 million in Virginia.

"Diabetes is a serious disease," said Nancy Pribble, Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Diabetes Prevention and Control Project coordinator. "If you have diabetes there are steps you can take to reduce your risk of serious complications, which include heart disease, stroke, blindness, kidney disease and amputation.

"The good news is that diabetes can be controlled through diet, physical activity and regular medical exams," said Pribble.

On a daily basis, people with diabetes need to eat the right amount of healthy foods, get at least 30 minutes of exercise, check their blood sugar and take medicines as prescribed. People with diabetes also need a flu shot, a complete foot exam and a dilated eye exam every year. At least twice a year they need a dental exam and an A1c (hemoglobin a-one-c) blood test from their doctor.

"This test is more precise than the daily blood test you do at home," said Pribble. "It tells your doctor how well you have controlled your blood sugar over the past three months."

"Controlling your health takes time and self-discipline, but it is worth it to have a better quality of life," said Rowe, who has been living with diabetes for 11 years. "You can't say, 'I'm tired of this diet and this exercise.' If you do, you're headed for trouble."

(more)

In 2003, the overall rate of diabetes in Virginia was 7.2 percent. The hardest hit area is the Lenowisco Health District, covering the city of Norton and Lee, Scott and Wise Counties, where approximately 17.3 percent of adults had been diagnosed with diabetes. Rates are also high on the Eastern Shore at 9.6 percent among adults.

To help reduce these high rates, VDH funds diabetes control projects in the Lenowisco and Eastern Shore health districts. Local project coordinators provide area residents with health information and education to prevent and control diabetes. They facilitate support groups that promote healthy eating and regular physical activity, and encourage yearly flu shots and foot and eye exams for high-risk populations.

Nearly one-third of those who have type 2 diabetes don't know it. Those at greatest risk include older adults and women, African American, Hispanic, American Indian and Alaska Native adults, and increasingly, children. You can determine the extent of your risk by taking the American Diabetes Association's Risk Test online at [www.diabetes.org/risk-test.jsp](http://www.diabetes.org/risk-test.jsp). Contact your doctor if you experience any of these symptoms: excessive thirst, frequent urination or unexplained weight loss.

Information about the risk factors, prevention and control of diabetes is available at the CDC Web site, [www.cdc.gov/diabetes](http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes).

#### **EDITOR'S NOTE:**

The Eastern Shore and Lenowisco projects are collaborating with local partners and have events planned in November to teach people with diabetes and their families how to control the disease. Each function includes a luncheon with a featured speaker and a variety of medical screenings, including blood pressure, blood-glucose, blood cholesterol, foot exams and flu and pneumonia vaccines. For more information about these events, contact:

Eastern Shore Project Manager  
Faye Sandsbury, Belle Haven, Va. (703) 442-9652, ext. 15  
[easternshorediabetes@yahoo.com](mailto:easternshorediabetes@yahoo.com)  
Event scheduled for Nov. 7, Elks Lodge, Accomack

Lenowisco Project Manager  
Lorene Allen, Wise, Va. (276) 328-1919  
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Event scheduled Nov. 3, Goodloe Center, Mountain Empire Community College, Big Stone Gap

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